

Disaster PREP

Plan, Respond, Exercise & Prepare

February 2025 issue from the DMH-Office of Disaster Services

PREPARE NOW FOR AN EMERGENCY



Staying Safe During Extreme Weather

By Alyssa Backes

Severe weather can strike with little warning, causing property damage, injuries, and even loss of life. Being prepared can make a significant difference in how individuals and communities respond to these emergencies. This year, Severe Weather Preparedness Week was on March 3 – 7, 2025. Each day of Severe Weather Preparedness Week often focuses on different threats, such as tornadoes, thunderstorms, flash floods, and extreme temperatures. Many state and local governments, schools, and organizations participate in Severe Weather Preparedness Week by conducting drills, sharing safety resources, and encouraging residents to review their emergency plans.

Key Preparedness Tips

1. Stay Informed - Monitor weather forecasts through local news, NOAA Weather Radio, or weather apps. Sign up for emergency alerts – even Groupcast or Textcaster.
2. Create an Emergency Plan - Establish a communication plan with family members and identify a safe shelter location, such as a basement or interior room for tornadoes.

In This Issue:

- Staying Safe During Extreme Weather
- Spring Into Mental Wellness: Embrace the Season with 988 Support
- ODS Current Events
- Check Your Clocks, Change Your Stocks
- Jenn's Jokes
- Training Opportunities

3. Build an Emergency Kit - Stock up on essentials like non-perishable food, water, flashlights, batteries, first aid supplies, and important documents.
4. Practice Safety Drills - Participate in tornado and fire drills at home, work, or school to ensure everyone knows what to do in an emergency.
5. Secure Your Home - Trim trees, reinforce windows, and secure outdoor furniture to reduce damage from strong winds.

By taking time to prepare, individuals and communities can reduce risks and improve their ability to respond to severe weather events. View the DMH Office of Disaster Services' Severe Weather Preparedness Week information on Facebook, X, or LinkedIn @DMHDisaster. Stay informed, stay prepared, and stay safe!

Spring Into Mental Wellness: Embrace the Season with 988 Support

By Tamara Fish

As the days grow longer and nature bursts into bloom, Spring offers a time for renewal and fresh beginnings. For many, this season is a reminder of the importance of mental health and well-being. With the changes in weather and routines, it's the perfect moment to focus on self-care and take proactive steps towards maintaining mental wellness.

The Spring Effect on Mental Health:

The arrival of Spring often brings a shift in mood, both positive and negative. For some, the longer days and sunshine offer a welcome relief from the winter blues, boosting energy and optimism. However, the transition from the colder months can also trigger feelings of anxiety, stress, or even seasonal affective disorder (SAD) for others.

This time of year, can also lead to significant life changes such as moving, starting a new job, or adjusting to new family dynamics, all of which can add to mental strain. Springtime is, therefore, an important reminder that mental health care is an ongoing journey.

The Importance of Mental Health Wellness:

Mental health is as important as physical health. Taking care of your emotional and psychological well-being enhances your ability to navigate challenges, manage stress, and improve overall quality of life. Regular practices like mindfulness, getting outside, staying active, and nurturing supportive relationships can help combat the effects of stress and anxiety.

How 988 Can Help:

If you ever find yourself feeling overwhelmed, it's important to know that support is just a phone call away. Enter 988—This help is available 24/7, providing free and confidential support for individuals experiencing a crisis, offering immediate assistance for those struggling with mental health challenges, suicidal thoughts, emotional distress or substance use.

Whether you need to talk to someone, get guidance, or connect with a trained crisis specialist, 988 is a lifeline that can help you through any difficult moment. You don't have to face mental health struggles alone—988 is

here to help you navigate the tough times, offering caring, compassionate support and resources to aid in your recovery and well-being.

Spring Tips for Boosting Mental Wellness:

- **Connect with Nature:** Take advantage of the beautiful Spring weather by spending time outdoors. Fresh air, sunshine, and green spaces can have positive effects on your mood.
- **Exercise Regularly:** Physical activity releases endorphins, boosting your mood and reducing stress. Whether it's yoga, walking, or hiking, find what feels good for you.
- **Practice Mindfulness:** Dedicate time each day for mindfulness, meditation, or deep breathing exercises to center yourself and reduce anxiety.
- **Prioritize Self-Care:** Take time to rest and recharge. Whether through a hobby, spending time with loved ones, or enjoying quiet moments, make self-care a priority.
- **Reach Out for Help:** If you're struggling, reach out to a counselor, therapist, or trusted individual. And remember, if things get overwhelming, 988 is available to provide support when you need it most.

As Spring brings new growth, it's a reminder that mental wellness is something that requires nurturing and care year-round. Embrace the season, take small steps towards self-care, and remember that support is always available through 988. Together, we can take care of our mental health and bloom into a healthier, happier season ahead.

ODS Current Events

By Debra Hendricks

The year 2025 has shown us some pretty impressive winter weather, thus far, and will likely continue to try to impress us as the seasons change. The winter storms were an excellent reminder to us that we need to be ready for whatever Mother Nature sends our way.

After the January winter storm, the Office of Disaster Services (ODS) completed After Action Reviews with some of our facilities and offices. The reviews were facilitated by ODS staff members and used guided discussion to help determine areas of excellence, as well as the areas where challenges exist.

The biggest takeaway from the reviews was the need for preparedness and the confirmation that preparedness works! Some of the lessons learned included:

- Stockpiling supplies is critical
- Arranging for overnight stays for staff ensures adequate staffing
- There is no substitute for using "blue skies" time before the disaster to build relationships within your organization and community

Remember that ODS has created [emergency preparedness planning guidebooks](#) for individuals and those who provide support to them. By answering easy-to-understand questions, individuals and their care providers can develop personalized plans.

Just a reminder that **March is Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month**. About 3-5% of the U.S. population lives with an intellectual or developmental disability. These include Down syndrome, Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Rett syndrome, Williams syndrome (ACL) and intellectual disability. This is a time to decrease

stereotypes, educate about misconceptions, create a more supportive society and advocate for equal access to essential services.

Also, **March 21 is World Down Syndrome Day**. The global Down syndrome community celebrates World Down Syndrome Day with the Lots of Socks campaign. Lots of Socks urges everyone to wear socks that get attention and lead to opportunities to advocate for individuals with Down syndrome. Learn more at the [World Down Syndrome Day](#) website.

Check Your Clocks, Change Your Stocks

By Heather Osborne

We got to Spring Forward one hour on Sunday, March 9th. This means it will get dark later in the day, the weather will, hopefully, start warming up, and it's time to test and/or change the batteries in your smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors. This is also a good time to reassess your emergency preparedness. Dust off your emergency plans and review and practice your escape routes and meeting places both at home and work. Take inventory of your first aid kit and disaster preparedness kit. Daylight Savings Time is the perfect time to refresh and restock, or even start building your kit. Check any food, medication, first aid items, water, and other items for expiration dates. Replace items as needed.

Below is a list of items you can incorporate into your emergency preparedness kit:

- Water (recommended to have one gallon of water per person per day for at least 3 days)
- Food (3-day supply of non-perishable, easy to prepare items)
- Battery-powered or hand crank NOAA weather radio
- Flashlight
- Extra batteries
- Whistle
- Personal hygiene items
- Emergency blanket
- Extra cash
- Medication (7-day supply)
- Cell phone chargers
- Manual can opener
- Plastic sheeting, scissors, duct tape



You can add other items as needed to best fit your situation (examples include baby or pet supplies).

[Read more about packing your go-kit on the Ready.gov site.](#)

[Check out the Red Cross survival kit supply list.](#)

Jenn's Jokes

In Loving Memory of Jenn Sovanski

What happens when it rains cats and dogs?

A: You have to be careful not to step in a poodle.

What did the tornado say to the car?

A: Want to go for a spin?

When are your eyes not eyes?

A: When the wind makes them water.

Training Opportunities

Upcoming Trainings

- [NOVA Basic Training](#)
 - March 11-13th from 8AM-5PM each day in Joplin.
- [Smart Safety Training: Avoiding risks at home, work, and in public.](#)
 - March 12th from 11AM-12PM in person at DMH Central Office or virtually via Webex.
- [CPR & AED Training](#)
 - March 27th from 9AM-11AM at DMH Central Office.
- [Prepare Crisis Management Workshop](#)
 - April 1-2nd from 8:30AM-4PM each day in Jefferson City.
- [Disaster Behavioral Health Conference](#)
 - April 8-10th in Columbia.
- [Stop the Bleed Training](#)
 - April 29th from 9:30AM-11AM at DMH Central Office
- [NOVA Basic Training](#)
 - May 19-21st from 8AM-5PM each day in Lee's Summit.
- [DMH Regional Tabletop Exercise](#)
 - May 21st from 10AM-3PM in Hannibal.
- [DMH Regional Tabletop Exercise](#)
 - May 22nd from 9AM-2PM in Saint Peters.

Training Always Available

[Psychological First Aid.](#)

[Trauma-Informed Care.](#)

FEMA ICS for Senior & Executive Leadership Management Systems (NIMS):

[FEMA ICS 100](#)

[FEMA ICS 200](#)

[FEMA ICS 700](#)

[FEMA ICS 800](#)

Contact Information:

[Missouri Department of Mental Health](#)

[Office of Disaster Services](#)

Phone: (573) 526-7821

Social media: @DMHDisaster

